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March 4, 2005

Docketing Division
Public Service Commission of South Carolina
Saluda Building
101 Executive Center Dr., Suite 100
Columbia, South Carolina 29210

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SC PUBLIC SERVICE
COMMISSION

**Re: Emergency Petition of AmeriMex Communications Corp. for a
Commission Order Directing BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc. to
Continue to Accept New Unbundled Network Element Orders**

Dear Sir or Madam:

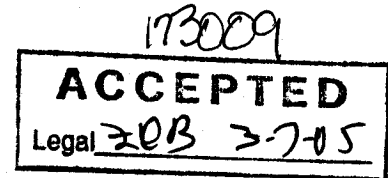
On behalf of our client, AmeriMex Communications Corp. ("AmeriMex"), we submit an original and fifteen (15) copies of the enclosed "Emergency Petition of AmeriMex Communications Corp."

✓ Please date-stamp the "Receipt" copy of this filing and return it in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Please contact the undersigned if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Glenn Richards
Counsel for AmeriMex Communications
Corp.



BEFORE THE
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA

In the Matter of)

Emergency Petition of)
AmeriMex Communications Corp.)
For a Commission Order Directing BellSouth)
Telecommunications, Inc. to Continue to)
Accept New Unbundled Network Element Orders)

Case No. 04-3166

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COMMISSION

EMERGENCY PETITION OF AMERIMEX COMMUNICATIONS CORP.

AmeriMex Communications Corp. ("AmeriMex"), by and through its attorneys, hereby files the instant Emergency Petition for a Commission Order directing BellSouth Telecommunications Inc. ("BellSouth") to continue to accept new unbundled network element orders until AmeriMex and BellSouth have completed the negotiations required by the "change of law" provisions of their interconnection agreement ("Agreement") in order to address the FCC's recent *Triennial Review Remand Order* ("TRRO").¹

On February 11, 2005, BellSouth informed AmeriMex by letter of BellSouth's intent to discontinue its provision of certain unbundled network elements ("UNEs") pursuant to BellSouth's unilateral interpretation of the *TRRO*. AmeriMex understands BellSouth's letter to reflect the mistaken view that BellSouth can unilaterally discontinue its provision of these UNEs, raise rates for existing services, and refuse to accept orders for new UNEs without first concluding good faith negotiations with AmeriMex. In fact, the Agreement bars BellSouth from taking any of these actions.

¹ *Triennial Review Remand Order, Unbundled Access to Network Elements, Review of the Section 251 Unbundling Obligations of Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers*, FCC 04-290 (Feb. 4, 2005).

The existing Agreement between AmeriMex and BellSouth requires BellSouth to engage in good faith negotiations with AmeriMex before implementing any change in law that BellSouth believes may have occurred. Section 14.3 provides that, “In the event that any effective legislative, regulatory, judicial or other legal action materially affects any material terms of this Agreement, or the ability of [AmeriMex] or BellSouth to perform any material terms of this Agreement, [AmeriMex] or BellSouth may, on thirty (30) days’ written notice require that such terms be renegotiated, and the Parties shall renegotiate in good faith such mutually acceptable new terms as may be required. In the event that such new terms are not renegotiated within ninety (90) days after such notice, the Dispute shall be referred to the Dispute Resolution procedure set forth in this Agreement.”²

Thus, to the extent that BellSouth believes that the Applicable Law governing the Agreement has changed in a material way as a result of the *TRRO*, Section 14.3 of the Agreement requires BellSouth to engage in good faith negotiations with AmeriMex on a contractual amendment that reflects this purported change of law. For these reasons, if BellSouth were to unilaterally discontinue its provision of UNEs as specified in its letter to AmeriMex, BellSouth would be in breach of the Agreement. BellSouth’s letter does not constitute an attempt to negotiate in good faith, but rather an attempt to unilaterally circumvent BellSouth’s obligations under the Agreement.

Moreover, the *TRRO* does not purport to abrogate the Agreement’s “change of law” provisions. Rather, the *TRRO* confirms that the FCC expects that “incumbent LECs and competing carriers will implement the [FCC’s] findings as directed by Section 252 of the Act” by “implement[ing] changes to their interconnection agreements consistent with [the FCC’s]

² Agreement §14.3.

conclusions in this Order.” The FCC further establishes that parties “must negotiate in good faith regarding any rates, terms and conditions necessary to implement [the FCC’s] rule changes,” and threatens that “the failure of an incumbent LEC or a competitive LEC to negotiate in good faith under section 251(c)(1) of the Act and our implementing rules may subject that party to enforcement action.”³ The FCC also clearly states that the *TRRO* transition mechanisms are “simply a default process” that could be superceded by prior or subsequent contractual obligations.⁴

Thus, it is clear that the *TRRO* does not permit BellSouth to unilaterally circumvent the change of law process, but rather requires BellSouth to engage in good faith negotiations with AmeriMex pursuant to the “change of law” provisions of the Agreement. Any contrary reading would not only conflict with the plain language of the *TRRO*, but would also render it null and void. Under the *Sierra-Mobile* doctrine, while federal agencies like the FCC may revise the terms of a private contract between two carriers concerning communications services, they may do so only when the contract’s terms “adversely affect the public interest” to a degree that is “much higher than the threshold for demonstrating unreasonable conduct under sections 201(b) and 202(a) of the Act.”⁵ Agencies must make a “particularized finding that the public interest requires modification.”⁶ The threshold for this finding is “more exacting” than the ordinary public interest standard, and “is sufficiently more particularized and requires analysis of the manner in which the contract harms the public interest and of the extent to which abrogation or

³ *TRRO* at ¶ 233.

⁴ *TRRO* at ¶ 228.

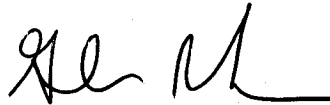
⁵ See, e.g., *IDB Mobile Communications, Inc. v. COMSAT Corporation*, 16 FCC Rcd 11474 at ¶¶ 14-16 (2001).

⁶ See *Atlantic City Electric Company v. FERC*, 295 F.3d 1, 40-41 (2002).

reformation mitigates the contract's deleterious effect."⁷ The *TRRO* contains no such particularized showing, and as such cannot be interpreted to supercede the existing "change of law" provisions in the Agreement.⁸

Accordingly, AmeriMex respectfully requests that the Commission (1) order BellSouth to comply with the "change of law" provisions of the Agreement in order to implement the *TRRO*; and (2) order BellSouth to continue to accept and process AmeriMex's orders for unbundled network elements under the rates, terms, and conditions of the Agreement, until the parties complete the process envisioned by the "change of law" provisions of the Agreement.

Respectfully submitted,



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⁷ *Texaco Inc. v. FERC*, 148 F.3d 1091 (1998).

⁸ This reasoning has been adopted in at least one other state to block BellSouth's unilateral decision to discontinue its provision of these UNEs, raise rates for existing services, and refuse to accept orders for new UNEs without first concluding good faith negotiations with CLECs. See Georgia Public Service Commission, *Generic Proceeding to Examine Issues Related to BellSouth's Obligation to Provide Unbundled Network Elements: Consideration of Staff's Recommendation regarding MCI's Motion for Emergency Relief Concerning UNE-P Orders*, Docket No. 19341-U (March 1, 2005).

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Sylvia Davis, a secretary in the law firm of Shaw Pittman LLP, do hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing "Emergency Petition of AmeriMex Communications Corp." was sent via U.S. mail, first-class or by hand-delivery, on this 4th day of March 2005, to the following:

Patrick W. Turner
General Counsel – South Carolina
BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc.
1600 Williams Street, Suite 5200
Columbia, SC 29201


Sylvia Davis